

# Intention – behaviour dynamics in MOOC Learning. What happens to good intentions along the way?

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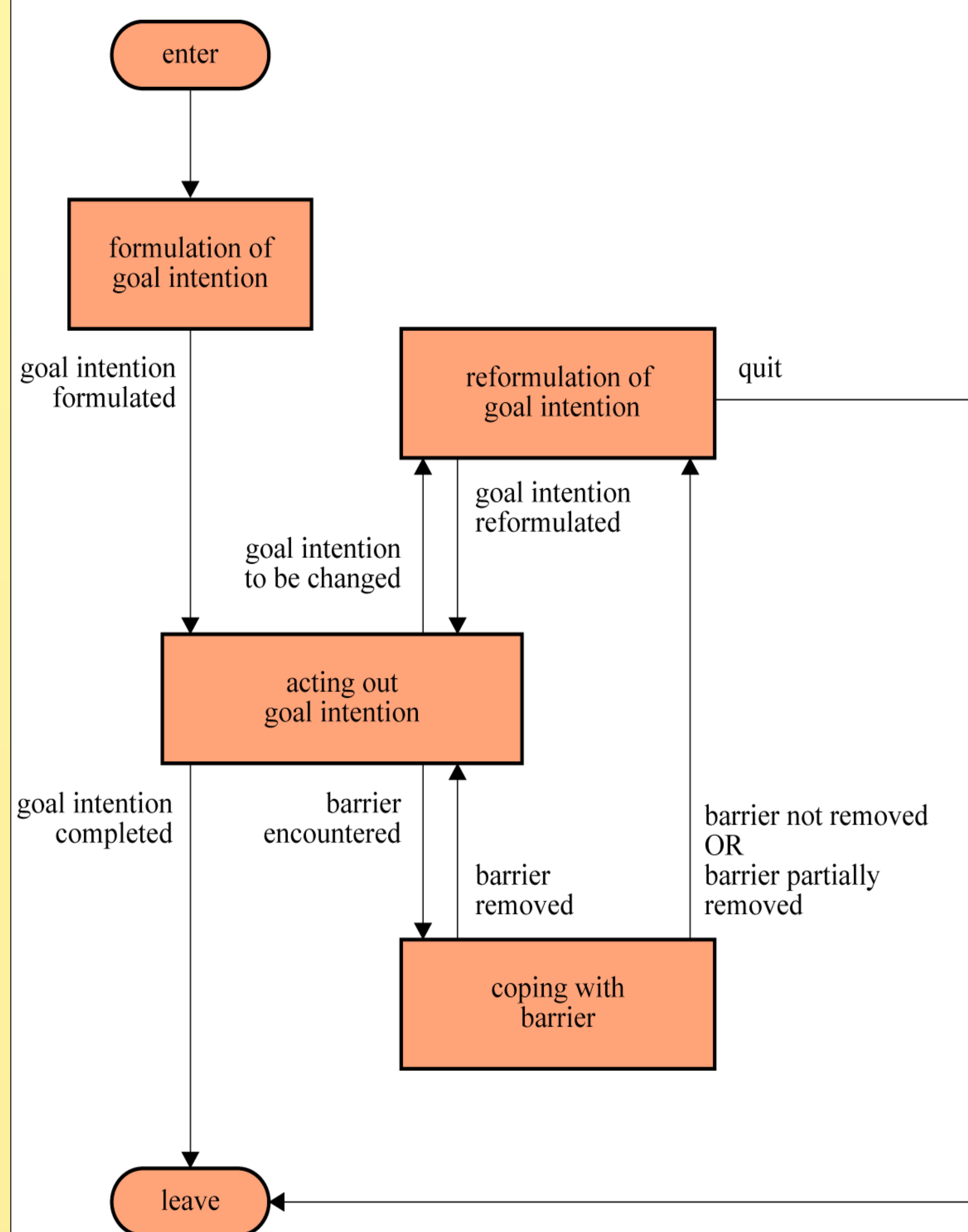
# Intention-Behavior dynamics in MOOC learning: What happens to good intentions along the way?

Maartje Henderikx, Karel Kreijns (Open University Netherlands) & Marco Kalz (Heidelberg University of Education)

## INTRODUCTION

MOOCs provide an exceptional learning environment and should not be compared to traditional education [1,2]. Henderikx, Kreijns and Kalz [3] proposed an alternative approach for measuring learning success which takes the intention of the individual learner as a starting point for measuring learning success. These intentions may cover a broad spectrum from just browsing the course to finishing it and earning the certificate. Yet, intention is not a perfect predictor for actual behavior [4]. There are many factors that possibly hinder or prevent learners from reaching their individual intentions. These can be either MOOC-related or non-MOOC related barriers [5]. With this study, we aim to further our understanding of success in MOOCs and take the next step in untangling the process of intention formulation and potential reformulation in the case of barriers. The results may serve as input for supporting learners in reaching their individual learning intentions.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



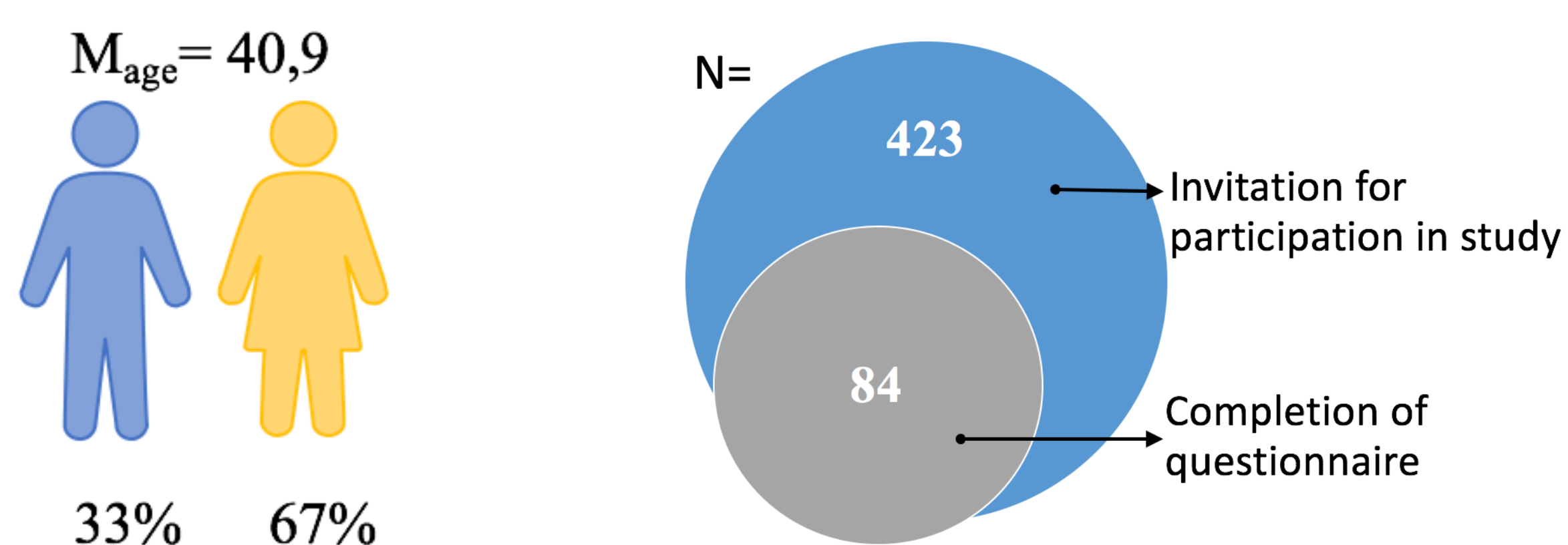
The reasoned action approach [6] served as a theoretical guideline for the model that should capture and visualize this dynamical process of learning in MOOCs. Important assumptions are:

- (1) learners can only find themselves in one state at a time
- (2) A triggering event is needed to transit to another state
- (3) Learners start the process in the state 'formulation of goal intention'
- (4) learners end the process by leaving the MOOC.

## METHOD

### Participants

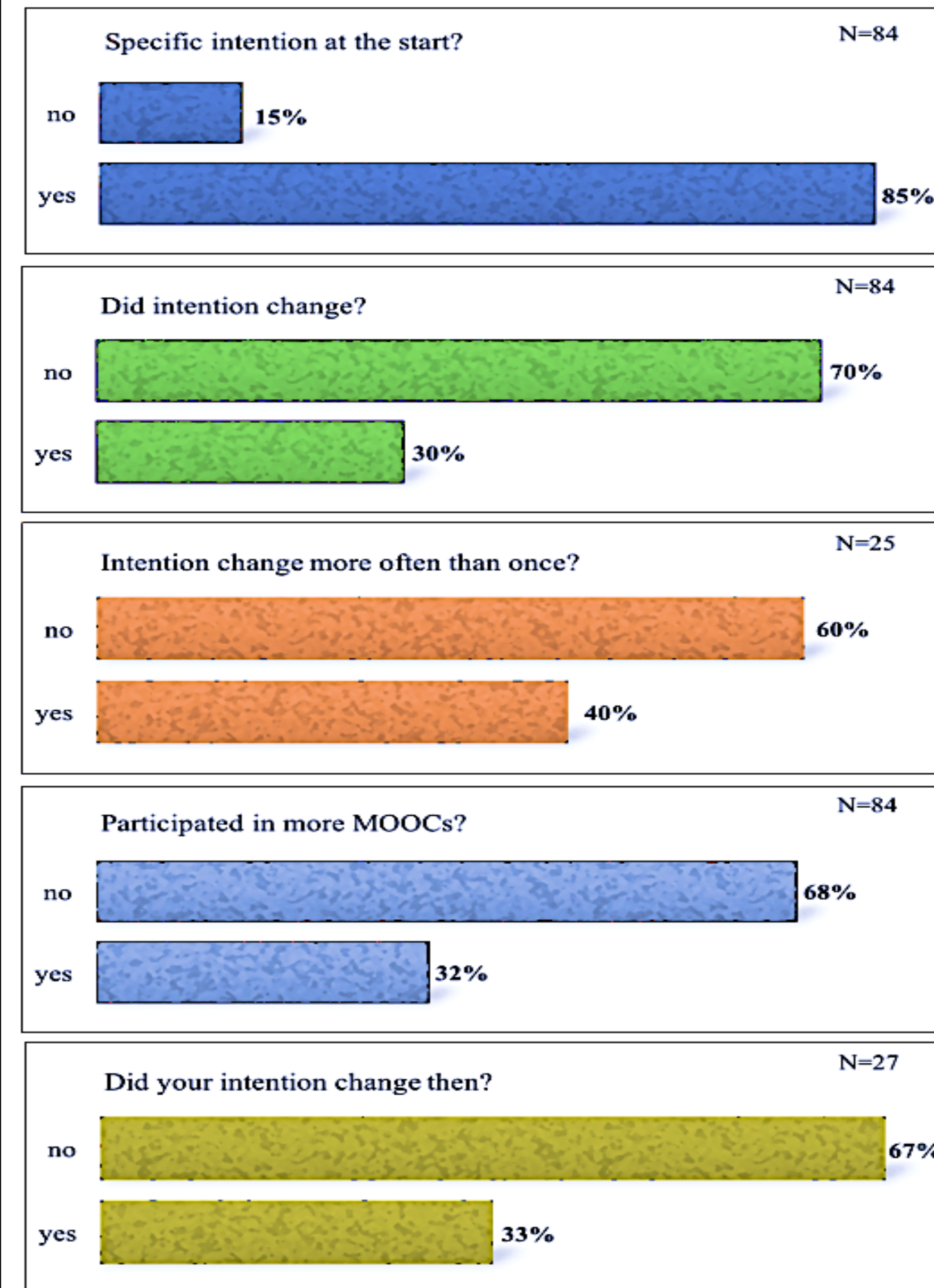
Participants were learners who participated in a MOOC on Marine litter in 2015 and 2017 and at that time indicated that we could contact them for future research purposes.



### Materials and Procedure

A self-constructed set of open and closed questions was formulated based on the theoretically grounded intention-behavior dynamics model. Learners received an invitation via the open source online survey tool Limesurvey to complete the survey on a voluntary basis.

## RESULTS



The main reasons mentioned by the respondents for reformulation of their intention were:

- “My ability to complete the MOOC changed as I got busy with other things”
- “Other commitments became higher priorities”
- “Changes in life or work demands were the biggest reason for changes of intention”
- “I did not have enough time to finish the MOOC”
- “The interaction with the instructors was deceiving”
- “The intention change was due to poor internet”
- “I underestimated the amount of time”
- “In the end, I couldn’t complete due to time constraints and commitments”

## CONCLUSIONS & LIMITATIONS

- ❑ Learning in MOOCs is an adaptable and thus dynamical process for learners as nearly one third of the respondents indicated that their intention indeed changed once or more often while progressing through the MOOC
- ❑ These changes of intention can be ascribed to the encounter of barriers to learning in MOOCs.
- ❑ Reasons for reformulation of intention mentioned were predominantly barriers which were related to the individual learner like lack of time, work issues and family issues.

Some limitations that need to be taken into account are:

- We had no knowledge of the design of the MOOCs the respondents were referring to when answering the survey questions.
- A specific design or topic of a MOOC might, to a certain extent, also have an influence on reformulation of intentions.
- This is a first study with a relatively small sample.
- Learners with higher (stronger) intentions might be more inclined to change their intentions and also cope with barriers than learners with lower (weaker) intentions.

Future studies should expand research on learner behavior in MOOCs and specifically investigate whether learners who reformulate their intentions are equally successful in reaching their personal learning intentions as learners who indicate that they don’t reformulate their intentions. The results of current and future studies may guide MOOC designers and providers in supporting learners to achieve their personal learning intentions.

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